A study carried out by the Services on the issue has recommended that women officers be excluded from induction in close combat Arms where chances of physical contact with enemy are high. The study has concluded that it is essential to obtain feed back on their performance based on revised pre-commission training (from 24 weeks to 49 weeks), detailment on courses such as junior command course and assessment of their performance as sub unit commanders especially in field areas; for holding higher ranks and grant of Permanent Commission. In the light of the above, grant of Permanent Commission to women has not been recommended presently.

Revamping of EPF networking and digitalisation project

*110. SHRI B.K. HARIPRASAD: Will the Minister of LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether the project, launched almost seven years ago to provide access to members of Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) through networking and digitalisation of more than 110 EPF offices, is to be revamped;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) whether the EPFO Board of Trustees has taken a decision to re-launch this much delayed project and if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI OSCAR FERNANDES): (a) to (c) The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation launched a programme called 'Re-Inventing EPF India' in the year 2001, which envisaged total revamp of the processes and procedures.

The application software developed by the consultants was given in the year 2006-07. On testing, the software was found to be inadequate to meet the requirements, thus, necessitating considerable improvements.

To set right the deficiencies, the consultants had asked for changes in the contract apart from financial compensation. The Central Board of Trustees, Employees' Provident Fund considered the issue and gave directions to explore alternate options. Accordingly, the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation has sought assistance from the National Informatics Centre (NIC), Ministry of Communications & Information Technology in implementing the project.

Threat on Naxalism to internal security

*111. DR. (SHRIMATI) NAJMA A. HEPTULLA: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that naxalism is the biggest threat to internal security;

(b) whether it is a fact that the forested regions of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Telangana and Vidarbha are the main centres of relatively successful Maoist activity;

(c) whether the absence of sufficient public intervention specially in Education, Health and Employment has allowed non-State factors to push their agenda among the tribals; and

(d) if so, the details of the schemes launched in tribal and naxal infested areas and their impact?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI SHRIPRAKASH JAISWAL): (a) to (d) Government is aware of the activities of the naxalites, and the threats posed by them, in some parts of the country, including Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra. The Government is following a multi-faceted and integrated policy and strategy for dealing with the problem of naxalism. This includes action on the security front of effectively counter and check violence by the naxalites, create a secure environment and promote development and economic growth in the affected areas, *inter alia*, with the objective of providing the necessary economic and social infrastructure, creation of employment opportunities, protection of rights and generally improving the quality of life of the people in these areas. The Government has also been emphasizing on the State Governments concerned about the need for focused attention and integrated planning and action in respect of the areas affected by naxalite violence and activities, and also the need for joint action and coordination among the States to facilitate effective operations against the naxalites.

Towards the above objectives, a number of institutional mechanisms have also been established which include, a Group of Ministers under the chairmanship of the Union Home Minister with the Chief Ministers of the affected States as special invitees, a Standing Committee of the Chief Ministers of seven naxal affected States, a Coordination Centre under the chairmanship of the Union Home Secretary, a Task Force on Inter-State Coordiantion headed by the Special Secretary (Internal Security) in the Ministry of Home Affairs and an Inter-Ministerial Group in the Ministry of Home Affairs to review the implementation of development programmes of various Ministries in the naxalite affected States. Recently a High-level Task Force headed by the Cabinet Secretary with representatives of all concerned Ministries has been set up with the objective of promoting coordinated efforts across a range of development and security activities so that naxal problems in the affected areas could be tackled in a comprehensive manner.

Some of the important development programmes on which particular attention is being given are the schemes pertaining to the Backward Districts Initiative (BDI)/Backward Regions Grant Fund (BRGF) of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY), the National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme (NREGP), the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM), Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), and various income generating, public utility and social-security schemes of Ministries like Rural Development, Agriculture, Panchayati Raj and Tribal Affairs. A major step has also been the enactment of 'The Scheduled Tribes and other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006' which seeks to recognize and vest the rights in forest land in the Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers who have been residing in such forest areas for generations.

Global marketing of DRDO products

*112. SHRI SHAHID SIDDIQUI: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has received any orders from some countries for Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) products; if so, the details thereof; and